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Mrs Joanne Raybould
Headteacher
Bridgtown Primary School
North Street
Bridgtown
Cannock
WS11 0AZ

Dear Mrs Raybould

Special measures: monitoring inspection of Bridgtown Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 20–21 March 2013, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings.

The inspection was the third monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in January 2012. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached and the main judgements are set out below.

Progress since being subject to special measures – good.

Progress since previous monitoring inspection – good.

Newly qualified teachers may not be appointed.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be posted on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body and the Director of Children's Services for Staffordshire.

Yours sincerely

Paul Weston
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in January 2012

- Improve pupils achievement by:
 - ensuring that teachers make good use of assessment information to plan lessons that are effective in meeting the needs of all groups of pupils
 - making better use of marking and pupils' personal targets to raise aspirations and guide pupils in their learning
 - increasing the range of opportunities for pupils to practise and extend their literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects.

- Improve the effectiveness of leadership and management by:
 - monitoring, reviewing and evaluating the impact of actions rigorously to inform strategic planning
 - developing the ability of the governing body to hold leaders firmly to account for pupils' levels of attainment and progress
 - setting realistic and challenging targets for pupils that raise expectations for their performance.

- Renew efforts to work purposefully with parents and carers to improve punctuality and raise pupils' attendance to at least the national average by April 2013.

Special measures: monitoring of Bridgtown Primary School

Report from the third monitoring inspection on 20–21 March 2013

Evidence

The inspector observed the school's work, including 10 lessons, scrutinised documents and met with the headteacher, deputy headteacher and subject leaders. He also met with parents and carers, the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Governing Body and held telephone conversations with representatives from the local authority.

Context

Since the last visit, there have been no staffing changes. However, two new governors have been appointed to the governing body.

Achievement of pupils at the school

The school's data shows that all groups of pupils are making accelerated progress in reading writing and mathematics in Years 1, 5 and 6. In these classes, an increasing proportion of pupils is achieving the expected standard and attainment is now broadly average. Most pupils are on track to achieve their challenging targets by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2. However, some variability remains in other classes. Boys are making slower progress in Year 2 in all subjects. School leaders have implemented a range of strategies to remedy this. For instance, boy friendly activities, such as the topic on aliens, have been introduced to encourage better writing. Weekly homework activities have also been provided to support boys' learning. In Years 3 and 4, the progress made by girls is weaker in reading, writing and mathematics. Targeted support from teaching assistants along with the introduction of peer readers and help from members of the Rotary Club are having a beneficial impact. Pupils with special educational needs are also making slower progress than other groups in Years 2 to 4. More precise individual education plans, along with small group and one-to-one teaching, are now being provided to help narrow this gap.

Good progress has been made in tackling those areas identified previously. Teachers' expectations are higher and pupils are rising to them. For instance, pupils' work in their books since December 2012 shows an improvement in both quality and quantity. More pupils are forming their letters accurately and joining them with greater precision. This is particularly evident in Year 6 pupils' books. However, more work is required to ensure that pupils' presentation, punctuation and spelling skills are consolidated and extended. Pupils are calculating with greater accuracy and are increasingly using the most efficient method to solve mathematical problems. However, pupils' mental mathematics skills, together with their problem-solving and reasoning abilities, require further improvement. Reading remains a high priority.

The teaching of letters and sounds (phonics) and focused reading sessions help pupils to develop their reading skills well because teachers and teaching assistants provide a range of work matched to pupils' needs. These help increase pupils' reading fluency, accuracy and confidence.

Children's attainment continues to rise in the Early Years Foundation Stage. Most children in the Nursery and Reception classes make good progress so that the proportion reaching the levels expected for their age in communication and language, literacy and mathematics is increasing. A wide range of opportunities are provided for children to apply their mathematical understanding indoors and outdoors. Speaking, listening and literacy skills are enhanced through role play and the plentiful opportunities provided for children to develop their reading and writing skills.

The quality of teaching

The quality of teaching has continued to improve since the previous monitoring visit. Most of the teaching observed during this visit was good, with the remainder requiring improvement. There is a purposeful and settled air to the school. Teachers have established clear routines so that pupils know what to expect. Carefully planned lessons are matched accurately to the needs of most pupils. Teachers use a wide range of resources, such as science equipment and musical instruments, to engage pupils in a practical way. Good links are made to pupils' prior learning and accurate use of technical vocabulary supports their learning well. Work is well matched to the needs of most pupils and they respond well to the challenges presented to them. There are plentiful opportunities for pupils to work in pairs and groups. Behaviour management strategies are applied consistently which ensures focused learning in most lessons. In those lessons requiring improvement, teachers spend too much time talking to pupils, questions do not extend pupils' thinking sufficiently, and some more-able pupils are not provided with work that challenges them enough.

The marking of pupils' work has continued to improve. It mostly provides an accurate assessment of how well pupils have done and what they could do next to improve. Teachers sometimes write questions or additional tasks into pupils' books, but pupils are not always given time to complete this additional work. Pupils regularly undertake extended writing activities which help them develop their ability to write at length using interesting and engaging vocabulary. Pupils' books and displays in corridors and classrooms show a good range of work. Work on the explorers, pirates and castles enliven the learning environment. A range of art, 3D models and science experiments, such as those on growing plants, promote pupils' learning well. Curriculum enrichment, such as a visit to Shugborough Hall and a residential visit to Standon Bowers, are making learning more interesting and relevant for pupils.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve achievement by ensuring teachers make better use of assessment information, marking, targets and increase opportunities for pupils to extend their literacy and numeracy skills in different subjects – good.

Behaviour and safety of pupils

The introduction and consistent application by all adults of the assertive mentoring strategy has proved extremely beneficial and has led to a good improvement in pupils' behaviour. 'Smiley's' are awarded to pupils who demonstrate, for example, good manners, politeness and sensible behaviour in the playground. A range of awards and rewards are given to those pupils who routinely demonstrate good behaviour. Pupils' achievements are celebrated with their parents and carers in assemblies and by the sending of letters home. In most lessons, pupils have good attitudes to their work. There are good levels of respect between pupils and teachers and between the pupils themselves. Most pupils are considerate and get on well with each other. The introduction of a range of lunchtime activities has reduced considerably incidents of poor behaviour because pupils are more purposefully engaged.

Attendance since January 2013 is close to the national average at 94.3%. A wide range of strategies are employed to secure good attendance, such as daily telephone calls and letters home. Regular meetings involving the education welfare officer, school nurse and attendance improvement officer discuss those pupils who are not attending regularly enough. Suitable strategies tailored to the needs of individual pupils are implemented to rectify persistent absence. Activities such as music sessions, cheerleading, dance and dodgeball are provided as rewards for those achieving high levels of attendance.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve punctuality and raise pupils' attendance to at least the national average by April 2013 – good.

The quality of leadership in and management of the school

There is a clear belief by all those who work at the school that Bridgtown has turned a corner and is on an upward trajectory of improvement. The clear drive and ambition provided by the headteacher and deputy headteacher has given staff greater confidence in their abilities. Staff feel valued in their work and are keen to improve their teaching repertoire and skills. Carefully selected strategies, such as assertive mentoring, are being systematically implemented. These are increasing rates of pupil progress and narrowing the gaps with their peers nationally.

The coordinators for literacy, numeracy and Early Years Foundation Stage have fully embraced their responsibilities and are helping to make a significant difference to teaching and learning. For example, they have undertaken a wide range of monitoring and evaluation activity, such as learning walks, observations of teaching, interviewing pupils about their work and work scrutinies. They have used the outcomes of this work to highlight strengths and pinpoint where further developments are needed. They have also supported those teachers requiring improvement by modelling effective ways of working. The boys' project is having a positive impact on the motivation, engagement and progress of a small group of boys in Year 5. The school has recently subscribed to e-books which is generating interest and stimulating an increase in reading by this group.

Members of the governing body have undertaken basic training and are increasing in confidence. Further training is being arranged for the summer term 2013. The Vice-Chair of the Governing Body is attending a National College of School Leadership training course for governors. Governors are increasing their understanding of the school's work by receiving reports and data information. They have made a variety of informal visits to the school. Governors understand the need to make regular, planned, formal visits to the school focusing on the priorities for improvement so that they can hold leaders to account for standards and quality. Most parents and carers are pleased with the school and believe their child is safe, happy and making good progress.

Progress since the last monitoring inspection on the areas for improvement:

- improve the effectiveness of leadership and management – good.

External support

The support from the local authority, consultants and the Local Leader of Education has been well targeted and effective. Their work has been well received and has contributed effectively towards the improvements made by the school.